THE

Experienced Christian's Magazine.

For APRIL, 1806.

PORTRAIT OF THE REV. BENTON RIGGIN.

MR. RIGGIN was born in Somerset county, in the state of Maryland; a place out of the reach of sects before the American Independence; of course the people were all near one way, as to religion, for sects were prohibited by a decree from over the great water, the spirit of inquiry was not alive then; sacred things was the province of the minister, and his only in the pulpit or desk: of course the youth emulated in playing, dancing, and seductions very far from being right. The most upright was sharp as a thornhedge, each one pursued that he saw best at the age of puberty, a short life and a merry one was the motto, or eat, drink and play, for after death no pleasure. In the year 1779, or thereabout, the oldest brother to Benton built a house, and left a spacious hall for a dancing room, to accommodate his neighbours, and thought to give it a noble warming, as he called it, as soon as finished. But God, who is rich in mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, sent a strange minister, a kind of a sectarian as we called him, and the ball room was occupied first with a rousing sermon! New things, new things! we hoped we should soon be done with that kind of exercise; but two of the brothers were cut by the arrow of the Al-

mighty, and thought it better to go to the house of mourning than the house of mirth.

Here, for the first, the people began to be divided about religion, and to cast in their minds whether it would be best to pray or frolick; the majority was decidedly for the latter: James and Benton were in the manority for once in their life, both chose Christ before Baleel, prefering the exercises of religion to the sprightly dance. Soon Benton received strength from the Lord, to turn his back upon all, however near, that stood in competition with Christ. He was mocked, laughed at, persecuted, and derided with many sarcastic sayings, but he grew strong in the grace of Christ; he lived in much prayer from day to day; he was borne as on wings of eagles. For two years, among his old acquaintances, some despised the beardless boy, for undertaking to admonish in the name of his Lord, but the word by him slew some, and wounded many; and when he had paid his county all he thought he owed it, he forsook all, and went into the hedges and highway, to invite other sinners to a sin-pardoning God. And so it was, the barren wilderness did smile, the places where dragoons lay, there grew grass with reeds and rushes.

To dedicate one's self to the ministry, in a wealthy, flourishing church, where rich benefices are every day becoming vacant, requireth very little virtue, and sometimes only a strong propensity to vice; but to choose to be a minister in the cause of such poor, persecuted religion as he went forth to serve, argues a noble contempt of the world, and a supreme love to God and the souls of men. These are the best testimonials of a minister, whose profession is not to enrich himself, but *to save himself, and those who hear him*, 1 Tim. iv. 16.

He had a patrimony which no one could deprive him of, he made no use of it, to his profit, though he might, as our country was in an infant state, and speculations were making many rich: to cultivate the vineyard of the Lord he lived, and spent his life for him to whom he owed every thing: he was blessed with a good share of health, and improved his time well: he was a good speaker, and loved discipline, was much respected wherever he went: truth was his pleasure, therefore he loved the bible, because there he found it; holiness his mark, therefore he loved prayer

because it was the means to obtain it; life eternal his prize, therefore he followed Christ, because no one else in heaven or earth can give life, but him, in whom Jehovah hath declared himself well pleased.

He died at Baltimore, in the year of our Lord 1800, and in the 15th year of his ministry.

Dear companion of my youth,
And hast thou reach'd the port,
The wish'd for port, before me?
Affliction long, thou know'st,
Threat'ned my dissolution,
E'er thou didst quit this inhospitable globe:
Yet in that word I live
Conflicting hours still to pass;
Not without hope I live,
That port to gain,
And join with Benton, and all
The blood-wash'd throng,
In ceaseless praises to the Triune God.

A SERMON, FROM A FRENCH AUTHOR.

THE SEVERITY OF GOD.

(Continued from page 256.)

For our God is a consuming fire—Heb. xii. 29.

MOREOVER, in explaining the meaning of the proposition in the text, we have collected several passages, and alledged several examples, which prove the truth under our consideration. The explication of this proposition, *our God is a consuming fire*, proves its truth in the sense in which we have explained it. We leave the enlargement of this article to your meditation, then, and proceed to the next.

III. We are to conciliate what the scripture saith of the

goodness of God with what it saith of his anger or vengeance: the gospel of last Lord's day with the gospel of this day: and, as the two subjects never appear more irreconcileable than when, having used all our endeavours to terrify people who defer their conversion till a dying-illness, we actually take pains to comfort those who have deferred it till that time, we will endeavour to harmonize the goodness and justice of God in that particular point of view.

First, Let us endeavour, in a general view, to reconcile the goodness of God with his justice, by laying down a few principles.

1. To speak properly, there are not several persections in God; but there is one single excellence, inclusive of every other, that ariseth from all his perfections, but of which it is not possible we can either form any complete ideas, or easily express by any name: in general, it may be called order, or love of order. Order, in regard to finite and dependent beings, is that disposition which induced them to act agreeably to their relations to other intelligent beings; to the faculties which the Creator hath given them; to the talents they have recived, and to the circumstances in which they are placed. Order, in regard to God, who is an infinite and independent intelligence, is that disposition which induceth him always to act agreeably to the eminence of his perfections.

2. Although God hath only a general excellence, yet it is necessary for us to divide it into several particular excellencies, in order to the obtaining of some knowledge of an object, the immensity of which will not allow us to comprehend it once. We are obliged to use this method in studying finite objects, whenever their sphere extends beyond the comprehension of a single act of the mind: And, if finite objects can be known only by this method, for a much stronger reason we must be allowed to use the same method of obtaining the knowledge of the great and infinite being.

3. The general excellence of God being thus divided into parts, each part becomes what we call a perfection, or an attribute of God, as vengeance, or justice and goodness: but each particular attribute will be still mistaken unless we subdivide it again into other, and still more contracted

spheres. Thus, when God sendeth rain and fruitful seasons, we call the blessing simply *bounty*. When he delivereth us out of our afflictions, we call it *compassion*. When he pardoneth our sins, we call it *mercy*. But as all these particular excellencies proceed from that general attribute which we call *goodness*, so that attribute itself proceedeth, as well as his justice, from an excellence more general still, which we have denominated order, or love of order.

4. Perfections, that proceed from the same perfection, or rather, which are the same perfections applied to different subjects, cannot be contrary to each other. Strictly speaking, God is no more just than good, no more good than just. His goodness is restrained by his justice, his justice by his goodness. He delighteth as much in the exercise of his justice, when order requires it, as in the exercise of his goodness, when order requires him to exercise it: or, to express the same thing more plainly, that which is goodness, when it is applied to one case, would cease to be goodness were it applied to a different case, because, in the latter, goodness would not be restrained by justice: or, to express myself more plainly still, because order, which alloweth the exercise of goodness in the first case, doth not allow the exercise of it in the last, so that what would be fit, or agreeable to order, in the first case, would be unfit or disorderly in the last.

To conclude. God is as amiable and adorable when he exerciseth his justice, as when he exerciseth his goodness. That which makes me adore God, believe his word, hope in his promises, and love him above all things, is the eminence of his perfections. Were not God possessed of such an eminence of perfections, he would not be a proper object of adoration. I should be in danger of being deceived were I to believe his word, or to trust his promise, and I should be guilty of idolatry, were I to love him with that supreme affection, which is due to none but the Supreme Being. But, the goodness and justice of God being equal emanations of the eminence of his perfections, and of his love of order, I ought equally to adore and love him when he rewardeth, and when he punisheth, when he exerciseth his justice, and when he exerciseth his goodness; because, in either case, he alike displayeth that general excellence,

that love of order, which is the ground of my love and obedience. I ought to adore and love him, as much when he drowns the world, as when he promiseth to drown it no more; when he unlocks the gates of hell, as when he openeth the doors of heaven; when he saith to the impenitent, *Depart, ye cursed, to the devil and his angels,* as when he saith to his elect, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,* Matt. xxv. 41, 34.

The justice and the goodness of God, then, are in perfect harmony; the gospel of last Lord's-day, and the gospel of this day, entirely agree; the prophet and the apostle preach the same doctrine, and the two texts rightly understood, *God is a consuming fire—the Lord will abundantly pardon;* both these texts, I say, present the same object to us, the eminence of the divine perfections, God's love of order. This is what we proposed to prove.

Let us now apply this general harmony of the goodness and severity of God, to the removing of a seeming inconsistency in the conduct of your preachers, and casuists, who first use every effort to alarm and terrify your minds with the idea of a death-bed repentance, and afterwards take equal pains to comfort you, when you have deferred your repentance to that time, and when your case appears desperate.

Why do we not despair of a man who delays his conversion till the approach of death? Why did we tell you last Lord's-day, that God pardoneth not only the sins of months and years, but of a whole life? Because that order, which constitutes the eminence of the divine perfections, doth not allow that a sincere conversion, a conversion that abandons the sin, and renews the sinner, should be rejected by God. Now we cannot absolutely deny the possibility of a sincere death-bed conversion, for the following reasons:

1. Because it is not absolutely impossible, that a violent fit of sickness, or an apprehension of death, should make deeper impression on the mind, than either sermons, or exhortations, or books of devotion could ever produce. This reflection is the more solid, because the phrase, an *unconverted* man, is extremely equivocal. We call him an *unconverted* man, who profanely rusheth into all sorts of

sins, and who never made one sacrifice to order; and we also, with great reason, call him an *unconverted* man, who hath renounced all sins except one. Now the idea of death may finish, in the souls of people of the latter sort, a work which they had indeed neglected, but which however was actually begun.

2. Because we are neither so fully acquainted with other people's hearts, nor indeed with our own, as to determine whether sin have so entirely depraved all the faculties of the soul, that it is past remedy; or, whether it have arrived at that precise degree of corruption, to which the eminence of the divine perfections doth not allow a display of that efficacy, which is promised to those who desire the grace of conversion.

3. Because we find, in the holy scriptures, that some have obtained mercy, after they had committed the very crimes, the remembrance of which we have said, ought not to drive any to despair. We meet with, at least, one example, which affords a probability, (I do not say a demonstration) that the eminence of the divine perfections doth not always require, that a man, who hath spent his life in robberies, should be excluded from the mercy of God. We find there a thief who was condemned to be crucified, and who said to the companion of his iniquites and miseries, *we receive the due rewards of our deeds*, Luke xxiii. 41. but who, notwithstanding all the misery of his case, applied to Jesus Christ, and from his adorable mouth received this comfortable promise, *Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, ver. 43.

4. Because we still see people, who, having lived thirty, yea fifty years in sin, have been converted in a time of sickness, and who, being restored to health, give full proof of the reality of their conversion. Such examples, I own, are rare, and almost unheard of, yet we could, perhaps, mention two or three, out of twenty thousand sick people, whom we have visited, or of whom we have heard, in the course of our ministry. Now the examples of two or three, who have been converted on a sick-bed, out of twenty thousand who have died without conversion, are sufficient to prevent our saying to one dying man, who should have put off his repentance to the last hour, that it is impossible for him to be converted.

5. Because God worketh miracles in religion as well as in nature; and because no man hath a sufficient knowledge of the nature of God's perfections to enable him to affirm that a miracle cannot, or ought not to be wrought in behalf of such a sinner.

6. Because we cannot find, that your pastors have any authority from their bibles to say to a penitent sinner, at any time, there is no more hope for thee: thou hast exhausted the mercy of God; thou hast gotten to that period, in which we have no other morality to preach than this, *he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. On the contrary, all the directions in the holy scriptures, that relate to the exercise of our ministry, engage us to pray for a sinner as long as he hath a spark of life; to endeavour to convince him as long as he is capable of reasoning; and, till he is past feeling the force of motives to conversion, to do every thing, that is in our power, to convert him. But doth not all this conduct support that which we have been endeavouring to prove? that is, that to what degree soever a sinner may have carried his sin, how long soever he may have lived in it, there will always be a sufficiency of pardon, where there is a certainty of conversion; agreeably to the gospel that we preached to you on the last Lord's-day, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon: For my thoughts of grace and mercy must not be measured by the ideas of the finest reasoning powers; much less by those of a gloomy desponding mind, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." This was the gospel of last Lord's-day.

The gospel of this day is, *our God is a consuming fire.* But these two gospels entirely agree, and our endeavours to comfort you, after you have deferred your conversion to a death-bed, are not inconsistent with our endeavours to terrify and alarm you, when we perceive that you obstinately determine to defer your repentance to that time. More-

over, the same reasons, which prevail with us to comfort you in that sad period, prevail with us to give you a salutary alarm before the fatal moment comes.

It is true, God's thoughts are not our thoughts; and it is possible that the approach of death may make deeper impressions on you, than either sermons or pious books have made; But yet *our God is a consuming fire.* What a time is a dying illness for the receiving such impressions! I omit those sudden and unexpected deaths, of which we have so many yearly, or rather daily examples. I omit the sudden deaths of those, who, while we were conversing and transacting business with them, were seized with violent pains, turned pale, and died, and were instantly streched on a bier. I pass those who went to bed healthy and well, who quietly fell asleep, and whom we have found in the morning dead and cold. All these melancholy examples we omit, for one would imagine, considering your conduct, and hearing your conversation, that each of you had received a revelation to assure him of an exemption from sudden death. But what a time is a dying illness for a renovation and conversion! Would not one suppose, that those, who hope to be converted then, have always lived among immortals, and have neither heard of death, nor seen a person die? Ah! What obstacles! What a world of obstacles oppose such extravagant hopes, and justify the efforts of those who endeavour to destroy them? Here, is business that must be settled; a will, which must be made; a number of articles that must be discussed: there, are friends, who must be embraced; relations that must be dissolved; children, who must be torn away; the soul must be writhen and rent and riven asunder with sighs and adieus. Here, arise frightful ideas of death, which have never entered the mind but amidst numberless hurries of necessary business, or countless objects of deceitful pleasures; ideas of a death, that hath been always considered at a distance, though so many voices have announced its approach; but the approach of which now astonishes, benumbs, and renders motionless: There, the illness increaseth, pains multiply, agonies convulse, the whole soul, full of intolerable sensations, loseth the power of seeing and hearing, thinking and reflecting. Here, are medicines more intolerable than the malady, operations more violent than the agonies which they are de-

signed to allay: There, conscience, for the first time, enlightened, awaked, and alarmed, rolls in tides of remorse: the terrible remembrance of a life spent in sin; an army of irrefragable witnesses, from all parts arising, prove the guilt, and denounce a sentence of death, on the departing soul. See now, whether this first reflection, which authoriseth our endeavours to comfort and invigorate your souls, when you have deferred your conversion to your last hour, be inconsistent with those which we use to terrify and alarm you, when you obstinately put off your repentance to that time?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts;* and we have neither a sufficient knowledge of other people's hearts, nor of our own, to affirm with certainty when their faculties are entirely contaminated: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* We know men, to whom the truth is become unintelligible, in consequence of the disguise in which they have taken the pains to clothe it; and who have accustomed themselves to palliate vice, till they are become incapable of perceiving its turpitude.

God's thoughts are not our thoughts, it is true; and we have seen some examples of people, who have proved, since their recovery, that they were truly converted in sickness, and on whose account we presume that others may possibly be converted by the same mean: But yet *our God is a consuming fire.* How rare are these examples! Doth this require proof? Must we demonstrate it? You are our proofs: you, yourselves, are our demonstrations. Who of you (I speak of those who are of mature age) Who of you hath not been sick, and thought himself in danger of death? Who hath not made resolutions in that distressing hour, and promised God to reform? The law of these exercises forbids certain details, and prohibits the naming of my hearers; but I appeal to your consciences, and, if your consciences be asleep, I appeal to the immortal God. How many of you have deposited your resolutions with us, and have solemnly engaged to renounce the world with all its sinful maxims? How many of you have imposed upon us by appearances of conversion, and have imposed upon yourselves too? How many of you should we have alledged as new examples of death-bed conversions, if God had not granted you a recovery? Are you converted indeed?

Have you renounced the world and its maxims? Ah! were we to judge, by the conduct of those who have recovered, of the state of those who are dead . . . . . My brethren, I dare not examine the matter, but I leave it to your meditation.

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and God worketh miracles in religion as well as in nature: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* Who can assure himself, that, having abused common grace, he shall obtain extraordinary assistance?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts;* and there is nothing in the holy scriptures, which empowers us to shut the gates of heaven against a dying penitent; we have no authority to tell you, that there is no more hope for you, but that you are lost without remedy: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire.* There are hundreds of passages in our bibles, which authorize us, what am I saying? there are hundreds of passages that command us, under the penalty of suffering all the punishments that belong to the crime, not to conceal any thing from the criminal: there are hundreds of passages which empower and enjoin us to warn you, you who are fifty years of age, you who are sixty, you who are fourscore, that still to put off the work of your conversion is a madness, an excess of inflexibility and indolence, which all the flames of hell can never expiate.

To conclude. This is an article, of which we, your pastors, hope to give a good account to God, however unworthy we are of his approbation. How often have we represented the danger of your procrastinations? Ye walls of this church, were ye capable of giving evidence, we would take you to witness! But we appeal to you, ye sermons, that have been preached in this assembly! ye shall be recollected in that great day, in which each of our hearers shall give an account of the use he hath made of you. Ye consciences that have heard our directions! ye shall bear witness. You gainsayers! you yourselves shall bear witness, you who, by reversing those ideas which the gospel giveth us of the mercy of God, have so often pretended to obscure those which we have endeavoured to give of his justice and vengeance; *We are pure from your blood, we have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God,* Acts xx. 26, 27. When we stand at his tribunal, and,

under a sense of the weakness with which our ministry was accompanied, say to him, *Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord!* Psal. cxliii. 2. Each of us will venture to add, with a view to the importunity that had been used to prevail with you to improve your precious moments, *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips; O Lord, thou knowest. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord,* Psal. xl. 9, 11. *I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God,* Isa. xlix. 4.

O! may God animate us with more noble motives! God grant, not that the eternal misery of our hearers may be the apology of our ministry: but that you may be our *joy and crown in the day of Christ!* Phil. iv. 1, and i. 10.—— Amen.

ANECDOTE.

IN the year of our Lord 1790, in Salem, West-Jersey, there was a great stir of religion: People were much alarmed about their state by nature, with much searching of hearts. The people called Methodists, were much in the spirit of it, and thought to be quite extravagant: some mocked, some had a curiosity to go and hear them; among others, a young woman, destitute of sentiments favourable to piety and religion, said she would go, and pretend she was affected, and fall down, and make them believe she was convinced of her sins, and be prayed for, and after a while rise up and profess to be converted. Accordingly she went, and acted the first part, pretty correct: it happened that, she being near the door, no one came to pray for her; her companion had to raise her up, and she appeared not inclined to stand. They led her to the door, and set her down in a wheel-barrow that stood there, and one of the men undertook to move her to some house. At this time, a physician passing by, asked what was the mat-

ter; on being told, he felt for her pulse, and found she had none, pronounced her dead; and dead she was! No private burying ground could be obtained for her, and she was buried under a fence, the side of the road, where her grave is till this day. If people are sincere in the worship of God, it is wicked to deride them; and if they are not sincere, God is their Judge. Let all men fear to mock at things that have the name of being sacred.

PART OF THE SERVICE USED ON THE DAY ABRAHAM OFFERED ISAAC, BY GOD's ANCIENT PEOPLE.

THE Hebrews began their New-Year on the same day with what followeth.

Now the gates of divine mercy are about to be opened, on this day will I spread forth my hands to God; O remember me, I beseech thee, on the day of reproof, the merits of him who bound, (Abraham) he who was bound, (Isaac) and the altar.

In the latter end Abraham was proved with the tenth trial, when God said unto him, Take thy son which was born unto thee of Sarah, and although thy soul be ever so strongly united to him in love, arise and offer him up unto me for a pure burnt-offering, upon the mount, on which the divine glory shall rise resplendent.

Abraham then said unto Sarah, thy beloved Isaac is now arrived to man's estate, and yet untaught in the service of Heaven; I therefore will go and teach him, what God hath ordained him to. To this she answered, Go my lord, but not too far distant. He replied, Let thy heart confide in God.

At the morning dawn, he arose to proceed on his journey, and took with him his two lads, who were not true believers. On the third day, they drew near the place they sought for, when he perceived the appearance of the divine

glory, honour, and majesty there. He stood still, to consider of the *performance of the divine appointment.*

When he questioned his young men appointed to attend, saying, Have ye observed that *splendid* light shining on the summit of Mount Morah? They answered, Nought but caverns do we see: He replied, Stay here, ye people, who are equal to the ass in dullness, while I and the lad go to prostrate ourselves.

They both went forward, to perform the sacred work, when Isaac addressed his father thus, Behold the fire and the wood prepared, but where, my lord, is the lamb, according to the established institution: Hast thou this day forgotten the law? His father answered, Trust in the living God, for he will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering; for know, that God will do whatsoever he pleaseth: Let us this day, my son, erect the throne before him, and then both the sacrifice and sacrificer, shall be exalted.

They knocked for the gates of mercy to be opened: *To behold* the son willing to be sacrificed, and the father ready to sacrifice *him*, firmly waiting on God, and steadily trusting on his mercy. For they who trust in the Lord, shall gather new strength. Thus, they earnestly sought to cleave to the inheritance of God.

With spirit and resolution did he prepare the wood for the burnt-offering, and bound Isaac, as though binding a lamb; but at that instant, the light of day appeared in their sight, *dismal* as night, [read Luke xxiii. *v.* 44, 45, &c.] floods of tears forcibly rushing down their cheeks: But though the eye wept bitterly, the heart rejoiced in its constancy.

Then Isaac said, O inform my mother that her joy is fled, for the son she bore at ninety years, is devoted to the knife, and the fire: where! where shall I seek a comforter for her? O my mother, in deep distress do I partake of thy weeping, and mournful plaint: My speech faultereth at the sight of the knife; O sharpen it, I pray thee, my father, and strongly bind me, and when the fire hath consumed my flesh, have fortitude, and take with thee the remains of my ashes, and say to Sarah, Lo, this is the savory remnant of Isaac.

At that instant, all the angels of the celestial chariot were moved *with compassion; Ophanim and Seraphim* vo-

luntarily interceding for mercy, and supplicating God in behalf of the prince of the host of the *chosen people*, saying, O grant a redemption, and appoint a ransom for him, and suffer not the world to be deprived of so great a *light*.

The Lord of Heaven then said unto Abraham, lay not thy hand on him, who is one of the three illustrious lights, return in peace ye angels of Mahanaim (it denotes two camps, to signify the orders of Ophanim and Seraphim) this is a meritricious day for the children of Jerusalem, and thereon will I pardon the sin of the posterity of Jacob.

O have regard to thy covenant, thou who dwellest in heaven, and remember thine oath to this afflicted and wounded congregation, and vouchsafe to hearken to this sounding of the *Tekeeang* and *Teruang*, (different forms of sounding the trumpet) and say to Zion, The time of thy salvation is come, behold I send you Elijah and Zinnon (a name by which the Messiah is called by the Rabbin.)

Our Jesus said, woman behold thy son, and left charge with John to comfort *his* mother—John xix. 26. 27.

PARTICULAR RULES FOR A PREACHER.

EVERY Sermon should have some point of practice to be enforced; it is otherwise unprofitable. We love to hear fine expositions, and a curious display of learning, &c. so we come back a little more learned, but not warned or excited to piety. Tell me what I am to desire, and what to avoid; how I may strengthen my weak faith; how repel temptations, and be a match for evil; how I may bear misfortunes without repining myself, and prosperity without making others repine.

I. Fix upon some particular point which you would enforce. Ask yourself, what am I going to prove? and how? What head of Christian doctrine do you intend to inculcate, that your audience may the more firmly believe it? To this all is to be directed. They that are best skilled, say every good sermon should be reducible to a syllogism. For want of this, many fine discourses are good for

nothing: they are elegant in language and sentiment, but produce no effect; they are every thing but what is needful and useful: therefore let it be the scope of a discourse to promote the salvation, and improve the morals of your hearers, not to raise their admiration.

II. Let your exordium be short, and relate to the matter that is to come. The head ought not to be half as long as the body. The entrance upon a discourse should be such as to gain the attention of the audience; but he disgusts them, who keeps them too long in expectation; and when once their attention drops, you will with great difficulty recover it. Therefore let your beginning be short, and to the purpose, lest it be said that you began with fish, and ended with fowls. Your conclusion should also be short, clear, nervous, and pathetic.

III. Speak clear, and never throw your words out too precipitately. It is incredible how this one thing will recommend you. The learned will take you for a person of judgment, who knows what is proper, and has a command of himself; and the unlearned will have time to follow and understand you.

IV. Avoid all affectation and stiffness. Purity of intention, and a desire for the glory of God, will make your delivery easy, humble, and natural. Whatever is unnatural, never pleases. Your diction should not be fine and overwrought, but nearly such as you would use in common talk; for this insinuates readily into the mind. He is the best preacher, who forgetting himself, seems to know nothing but Christ crucified. He avoids all vain and curious questions, and all novelties, as improper for the pulpit; having nothing in his intentions but the reformation of the people.

V. Suit yourself to the audience, the place and the time. As it is a great fault not to be understood at all, it is also bad if you are understood with difficulty. There are figures of speech which give great help to the understanding; such as the prosopœia, the form of a dialogue, the strong delineation, as if a thing were present to the view (hypotyposis). But above all, there should be a frequent use of similitudes, for this is the manner of the Scripture throughout. A strong text, often repeated, has good effect; as our Saviour, three times in four verses, uses

that striking expression, the *worm that never dieth.* Him you are to imitate; not only in the *manner*, but in the *duty* of preaching: never omit it; he was always ready for it.

VI. It is of great service to stop sometimes, to recollect yourself, and preserve your presence of mind. This is particularly necessary toward the conclusion, when every nerve must be strained to fix what you have explained in the mind of your hearers. Unison of tone, or monotony, is ever to be avoided as lifeless and unaffecting.

VII. Let human learning be the servant, but let divine learning rule. Build nothing but upon the Scriptures: a preacher should have them nearly by heart; for which purpose, he should read at least two chapters every day of his life, and notify therefrom into his classes or his *symbolæ.* As one egg hath more nourishment than a pot full of herbs, one sentence of the bible will have more effect than a thousand from Aristotle or Cicero, which are dry and bloodless. Many err in this respect, who totally, or at least very shamefully, neglecting the divine oracles, think they have done finely, when they have painted themselves with the colourings of heathen orators, &c.

VIII. Write down your plan, arguments, texts, disposition, &c. in a rough draught first; and have all your materials ready before you begin to build. As the work goes on, you may pick and choose, leave out or alter, as you see best. No practice but this can make the composition good.

IX. Above all things divide clearly, and sort your matter well: the work is more than half finished when this is done: your words and sentences will come easy, and as it were of themselves. To methodize and digest well, is the point both for the speaker and the hearer: a sermon well digested, may be got by heart over night.

X. Never exceed an hour; but rather fall short of it. None can attend more, even though you were to preach roses and jewels; nor can the memory carry off more. When the attention is exhausted, you speak without effect; the full stomach loaths the honey and the honeycomb: that which is moderate and well disposed, will be the sweetest.

XI. Teach nothing to others, of which you are not per-

suaded yourself. Nothing will reach the heart but that which comes from the heart. How great is the difference between him who collects and repeats, and him who speaks affectionately of that truth which he knows and feels! To gather scraps from homilies and sermons, and then consarcinate, is poor work; but if nothing better can be done, make it your own, by thinking well on what you have collected from others.

XII. Reprove vices sharply, but not persons. Great men, and persons in authority, should not be named, or even pointed at; which exasperates without amending: private admonition should rather be used. Never spare the vices which are most in fashion; but even here all bitterness is to be avoided—according to that admonition of St. Paul, *reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine*, 2 Tim. iv. 2. Let your pity prevail against your indignation—remember Christ weeping over the guilty Jerusalem; and never forget, that sins, not sinners, are to be lashed.

XIII. Detest all pride, first in yourself, and then in others. Let your speech, and even your countenance, breathe humility, and lowliness of heart. The pompous orator is a mimic, or a tragedian; more fit for the stage than the pulpit; and his only object is to gain applause. The preacher who is truly humble, despises no man, nor doth he hurt any one by private reflections. He will not only bear reproof, but court it: he will get some faithful friends to tell him his faults. Chrysostom suffered himself to be admonished and corrected by an old woman. He that is to know himself, must have faithful friends, or bitter enemies: and the divine Spirit only can enable him to make a proper use of them.

XIV. Imitate nobody in preaching. It is useful to hear good preachers, but to imitate their manner is not so. Every man is most powerful in his own natural character. In other sciences, imitation is good: here it is bad. Every man should consult his own genius, and cultivate it to the best of his ability. When a man is out of himself, then he is affected; and affectation speaks every thing.

XV. Do what you say. Without this nobody believes you. Be the same out of the pulpit as in it: otherwise it will be cast in your teeth, "he says and *does not*." Be ye

then doers of the word, and not preachers of it only. The gospel is never so effectually recommended, as when we see it realized in the life and manners of the preacher.

Conclusion.

The improvement of our time is the first consideration in human life; for on time depends eternity. Nothing but time can make a scholar or a divine; and he that makes the most of it, by some such method as is here recommended, is the wisest man. Many never discover its value till they have lost it, and would give the whole world, if they had it, to recover it again. The only laudable avarice is that of our time; of which there have been many great examples. Cato Uticensis made it his practice to carry a book with him into the senate-house, that instead of hearing idle talk, he might read till business began. Plato had Sophron, the poet of Syracuse laid at his pillow when he was dying. Abbas Dorotheus had a book open while he was eating, and by his bed side against he waked. Bernard said, "let us talk this hour out: on this hour eternity may depend." Beware of thieves, but especially of those who rob you of your time, for which they can never make you any amends. Read, note, be vigilant, be active, stock your memory; let no hour or minute be without its use; or, in doing what is nothing to the purpose: Teach us, good Lord, so to value our time, and *number our days*, as to *apply our hearts unto wisdom.*

OF THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

THE first good news of this kind, which came to the notice of the inhabitants of England, was in the year 700, or as some write, 709, when Adelme, Bishop of Sherborne, translated the Psalms of David, into the Saxon language, which is thought to have suffered shipwreck by the the tempest of the Danish wars, wherein the churches

(which were the learned treasuries or public libraries of those times) were burned.

About twenty, or at the most thirty years after, Beda translated the whole bible into the same tongue, as Mr. Fox observeth in his epistle dedicatory to Queen Elizabeth, set before his translation of the gospels out of the Saxon tongue, printed anno 1571. Yet elsewhere he maketh mention only of the translation of St. John's gospel, as the last labour of his life.

After Beda about two hundred years, king Alfred undertook the translation of the psalter, happily either to supply the loss of that of Adelme, or to better that of Beda's: for Beda's translation was simple, without any curiosity of stile; and of Alfred, it is said of him, that none of the English were more acute in conceit, or more elegant in expression than he was: which was the more to be marvelled at, because he was twelve years old, before he knew a letter in the book; but he ended his life well near the beginning of his work, having scarce finished the first part of it.

The translation of the bible, of most note after these, (and whether they came between we do not find) is that of John Wickliffe, which was best liked and most used, by the better sort of christians, in the reign of King Richard the Second, but so much maligned by the popish party, that it was condemned in a provincial synod at Oxford, held under archbishop Arundel, anno 1406; and after he was dead and buried, by a decree of the council of Constance, about the year 1412, his bones were to be unburied, and his books to be burned: and so they were, not only where the decree was made, but in Bohemia, where Subincus (archbishop of Prague) making diligent inquisition after them, found to the number of two hundred volumes of his composing (most excellently written, and richly adorned with bosses of gold, and rich coverings) and burnt them all. And in England there was a strict proclamation for abolishing of them, by King Henry the Eighth, anno 1546.

And though the papists had an especial spite at his translation of the bible, both because it was a translation into the vulgar tongue, and such a translation as they accounted most herytical, yet, by God's providence, some manuscript copies of it, as well as of others of his books,

were preserved, which are extant to this day in divers libraries, and is attested by a very learned author, much versed in the most authentic records and copies of ancient writers.

Next unto Wickliffe's translation, was that of John Trevisa, who undertook and finished the translation of the whole bible in English, at the intreaty of his patron, the Lord Barkley, anno 1397, in the reign of Richard the Second, as Balaus wrote; though some say it was in the year 1400, and in the reign of Edward the Fourth.

In the year 1527, Tyndall first translated the new testament; after that, he took in hand the translation of the old, finishing the five books of Moses with sundry most learned and godly prologues; the like also he did upon the new testament. When he translated the fifth book of Moses, called Deuteronomy, minding to print the translation at Hamburg, he sailed thitherward; but by the way, (upon the coast of Holland) he suffered shipwreck, whereby he lost all his books and copies, and so was compelled to begin all again anew: when, in another ship, he was by the divine providence safely conveyed whither he first intended; and where Mr. Coverdale, being there before him, tarried for him, who helped him in the translation of the five books of Moses, from Easter till December; and it is likely he made use of his help, if not to compose, at least, to revise his translation of the new testament; which society in the same service, may be the reason, that the translation is sometimes called Tyndal's, sometimes Coverdale's.

But what name soever it had, it had an ill name among the popish prelates, chiefly for Tyndal's sake, those *spiritual fathers* cryed out upon it, declaring that there were a thousand heresies in it; and some said it was not possible to translate the scriptures into English; some, that it was not lawful for lay people to have it in their mother tongue; some, that it would make them all heretics.

For prevention whereof, a proclamation was published by King Henry the Eighth, bearing date July 8, 1546, prohibiting after the first of August, all persons to receive, take, or keep in his or their possession, the texts of the new testament, of Tyndal's or Coverdale's translation in English, or any books in the English tongue, under the names of Frith, Tyndall, Wickliffe, Ioy, Roy, Barill, Bale,

Barnes, Coverdale, Turner, or Tracy. But above all, the name of Tyndal and his translation were most traduced, which were exposed to more hate and contempt by means of Sir Thomas More, who used his wit (which was as sharp as his spleen) to cavil at his writings, and his power, which was as great as both, (being Lord Chancellor of England) to suppress them, especially his translation of the scripture; which that it might the more undoubtedly be done, (besides the proclamation forementioned) there was an act of parliament passed, to abolish Tyndal's translation by name, with divers other English books, yet with allowance of other translations, for private use, and with limitation and exception of several sorts of persons, to whom they were forbidden.

Notwithstanding Tyndal's translation was not smothered, but came to light, and was more acceptable for the correction of it by Thomas Matthewes, which was published as his translation, with annotations, and printed by special privilege of King Edward the sixth, anno 1551, and so was that of Coverdale's allowed by public authority, which bore his name, because he made some corrections of Tyndal's.

And from the beginning of Edward the Sixth, anno 1549, towards the twentieth of Queen Elizabeth, anno 1577, the bibles of the English translation used in churches, were either Tyndal's or Coverdale's; but that Tyndal's was the chief and most warranted, may thence be collected, for that the reading of Psalms are in the service books to this day, according to his translations, (as some have observed) the Epistles and gospels are also conformable to the same translation. In the year 1560, were the Geneva interpretations, and annotations set forth. And ann. 1577, there was an English edition of the bible published by divers bishops, in a large volume, yet that from Geneva was generally more used, and more esteemed than any of those that went before it, until the year 1612, when the last translation, procured by King James, was first imprinted, which for the text thereof, may give better satisfaction to such as have ability to compare the original of both testaments and their translations, together.

A PROFLIGATE HUSBAND REFORMED BY A PRUDENT WIFE.

RECENTLY, in the city of New-York, it happened that a husband took to being out at night: where he went, his wife knew not, till she was informed by a friend that he frequented an house of ill-fame. She was particular to inquire for the street and number, and when informed, she took occasion to go to the house: she found it a miserable place, every thing dirty and filthy. After making some excuse to her rival for calling, such as wanting a girl to work, or the like, she went home, unknown to the miss. She considered the bed very unfit for her husband to rest in, and therefore sent a boy with clean sheets, pillow cases, &c. He took them to the place, and gave them to the woman. She thought they came from Mr. ———, and decorated her bed with them as quick as possible. At night, when the unhappy man came, he could but fix his eyes on the place of his lodging, it being so altered, and began to congratulate his harlot on the preparation she had made. She said it was his present she had prepared for him! My present? said he: Yes sir, said she, they are the things you sent by the boy to-day. He declared he had not sent them; and on examination found the name of his wife on each of them. He then asked who had been there that day: she described a lady, and from the description he found that his wife had visited that sad place of his infatuation, and had found out his wickedness. He went directly home, and shewed many signs of sorrow, which his wife inquired the cause of, till at length he asked her if she had sent some sheets to such a place? She said she had. He asked her the reason: she told him she had seen the place where he lodged, and that the bedding was not fit for him; and as they had plenty, if he must sleep there, she thought it best that his bed should be as well prepared and as comfortable as her's was, if possible; for her wishes and care should be his happiness.

He acknowledged his folly, which was but of late he had taken to, and that if she would forgive him, he would forever cease: her good heart soon did that, and he became reformed; yea, saved from ruin.

What great things a little prudence will effect.

THE EXPERIENCE AND DEATH OF EFFAMY TOMPKINS.

EFFAMY Tompkins was the daughter of Nathaniel and Effamy Tompkins, persons who have long been engaged in the christian warfare, and are well acquainted with the path which leadeth to life and salvation: so that this child had parents capable of instructing her in the way to Heaven. But like most of the dear youth, she found too many things to lead her mind off from the practice of true piety, and as she was called away in early life, she was not made a partaker of saving grace till she drew near the close of her days. Little more than a twelve month before she left the shores of time, to enter a blissful eternity, her countenance changed, and she began to complain. Her parents soon became alarmed, thinking they discovered some consumptive symptoms. Different remedies were applied for her relief, but to no effect. A physician was sent for, but he proved unto her a vain helper; *a physician of no value.* Her disorder increased; the roses upon her cheeks faded away, and a death-like paleness overspread every feature: her pious parents saw she was fast hastening towards the borders of the grave, considering no time was to be lost, improved the present opportunity in discoursing with her, upon the important concerns of her soul. Her mother asked her if she was willing to die; her answer was, if she was prepared she should feel no reluctance, but that she could not endure the thought of leaving the world to enter into torment. They gave her the most salutary advice, recommending her to Jesus; knowing, by happy experience, that he was an hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land: she listened with attention to their admonitions, and said she wanted some one to read and pray with her. Her indulgent father undertook the task, and was diligently attentive to her. Their christian neighbours sometimes called in to see her, and would join with the family in supplicating Heaven in her behalf. Their united labours were not in vain in the Lord. Her sorrow was soon turned into joy, her mourning into songs of deliverance: she

obtained remission of sins; her precious soul was washed in the all-atoning blood of Jesus, and she was made meet for an inheritance amongst the saints in light. She was a pattern of almost unexampled patience and meekness in suffering. None of that fretfulness or peevishness of temper, so generally an attendant upon this disorder, was discernable in her. She seemed very thankful to her friends, for their kind attention. If a little drink was brought her, she would acknowledge the favour, and whisper out her obligations to the bearer of it, when she was so weak it was with great difficulty she could speak.

She once told a pious friend, that it was her earnest prayer, she might be armed with patience, and bear her affliction with christian fortitude; and it was evident from her conduct, her prayer was answered.

A few days before her decease, her mother repeated her former question, by enquiring of her if she was willing to die; she replied, "yes mama, I am willing to die, or willing to live: if I die, I shall die happy; if I live, I mean to live happy; for this day I have trampled sin and satan beneath my feet." She retained an unshaken confidence in Christ, to the last moment of her life. The grim messenger was disarmed of his terrors, death had lost its sting. The night on which her happy spirit took its flight to glory, her mother asked her what she must tell her brother and sisters, if they should not come in time to see her: Bid them, said she, a happy farewell. She took an affectionate leave of her friends, exhorted her brothers and sisters to break off their sins, by repentance, and seek the Lord, and shortly after fell asleep in Jesus. Thus, like a tender plant, blasted by untimely frost, she was cut down in the bloom of youth, aged fifteen years, three weeks, and five days.

When nature fails, and day and night,
Divide thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart, O Lord,
Thy wonders shall adore.

GRATITUDE.

OF all the sins that ever created beings were or are tempted to, ingratitude is the most common, and the most ruinous: it is as bad as the sin of witchcraft, and worse: then marvel not it is so prevalent, as it tends to fill up the measure of iniquity so fast: it made angels devils, and makes men worse than brutes. A dog will be attentive to his owner for a crust or a bone, throwed to him once a day, and will die at his master's side; but ungrateful man will desert his aged father, and tare the breast of his tender mother; robs his benefactor, who helped him when no one else would: yea, refuse his gracious Creator's precepts, and abuse that benevolent hand which is all the day long lifted up in his behalf. If a man has gratitude in all things, he is a christian.

As the branches of a tree returns her sap to the root, from whence it arose; as a river poureth its streams to the sea, whence its springs were supplied, so the heart of a grateful man delighteth in returning a benefit received. He acknowledgeth his obligation with cheerfulness; he looketh on his benefactor with love and esteem; and if to return it be not in his power, he nourisheth the memory of it in his breast with kindness, he forgetteth it not all the days of his life. The grateful man is like the clouds of heaven, which droppeth upon the earth fruits, herbage, and flowers; it turneth the barren wilderness to a fruitful field, and maketh the stertile hill as the garden of the Lord: it throweth the mantle of candour on human imperfection; it ever cherisheth respect for those who have done the least act of kindness to him, and sheds tears of thankfulness at the remembrance of it.

This, and the like, is the exercise of a grateful mind, as it respects man. But how is it toward our *God, Father, Redeemer, and advocate in Heaven,* who, after so much done for us, is now preparing a place for us in heaven? an inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, reserved for us, and at the same time keeping us by the power of faith, unto salvation. The grateful heart is surrounded, and made

the prisoner of amaze and love, and constrained to say in the noble strain of the poet—

Through all eternity, to thee
A grateful song I'll raise,
But O, eternity's too short.
To utter all Christ's praise.

But ingratitude is filled with envy—

Which never smiles, but when the wretched weep,
Nor lull's her malice with one moment's sleep,
Restless in spite, and wakeful to destroy,
She pines and sickens at another's joy.

TO THE PATRONS OF THE EXPERIENCED CHRISTIAN's MAGAZINE.

Dear Brethren,

I HAVE had the pleasure of seeing the hydra of a party spirit stunned in you, who have been pleased to support a work without controversy: By this we can see how thin a partition there is between men of experienced religion, yea, see that it is but a mere imaginary line, as weak as the thread of spider's webb, augmented only by ambitious men to a cable, with which they bind and fetter down their unexperienced followers and themselves, but can no longer bind them whom Christ has made free by his spirit: No, where the spirit of God is, there is liberty. In these two poor little volumes, we will let the world see, that we are Christ's disciples; that in the spirit of religion (and what is the body without the spirit) we are one; begotten again to a lively hope, through the resurrection of Christ from the dead; and born again to an inheritance uncorrupted, and undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven

for us—*Us*, who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.

We have much cause to bless God, for the good understanding which subsists between the different denominations in America, our highly favoured land; how some of all are charmed to hear the honour Christ has conferred on his followers in life, and in death, "the chamber where the good man meets his fate." By this means we have been enabled, at times, to look into the state of the dead with pleasure and say, Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my beginning and end be like his; to sing the angels' song, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, &c. These things arm the experienced christian; teach them how to meet the king of terrors with calmness, and courage; how to leave our fatherless children to the preservation of God, and our widows to his trust.

We are taught that Christ hath done, and still continueth to work miracles in our day and time, which our fathers knew nothing of; and that the knowledge of Christ is increasing, and that kings will yet come to this light, and princes to the brightness of this rising, and that we shall by this means have more use for a plow than a sword, and reap-hook than a bayonet; and that the church last formed in this once heathenish land, may be first in the circles of holiness, and christian experience in all the world.—Well, my friends, what greater honour would you have from your Lord, than to be called the restorers of the breach? the people by whom Israel, who is small, should be raised, nursing fathers and nursing mothers; for some of the narrations which you have read, with tears, were taken by women from the lips of dying christians. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfect praises. In reading the names, you will find one a follower of St. Peter, of Paul, of Apollos, of Luther, of Calvin, of Fox, of Wesley, &c. but all I trust of Christ; for with experienced christians, these are only names of men, with whom God hath honour, but not with that honour so as to say, *This is my beloved son, hear ye* [only] *him:* This honour belongeth to the captain of our salvation, who trod the wine press alone, and *of the people there was none to help him.*

At my first attempting this work, a reverend friend of mine, then in Philadelphia, said, he highly approved of

such a work, but doubted that I should not meet with encouragement, if I pursued a plan so liberal, for men of such sentiments were too rare to be found: his doubts sprang from good will, and I know he will be happy to see that so many have contributed to its support. If each denomination would consult the prayer of our Lord, "*that they* may be one as we are *one*;" great grace would be upon the people of America, and the prosperity of Zion would be great. O Lord, pardon the iniquity which party zeal disposeth us all to.

I humbly return you thanks for the confidence you placed in me, and as I have not been able to procure all the patrons names, please to excuse this, and know that my prayer to God shall be, for the prosperity of you and yours; that your child may know that we have one Lord, one faith, and the self same baptism.

Adieu my friends, again I say,
And always faithful prove,
'Till we shall meet in endless day,
And dwell in boundless love.

'Tis there with Christ, in paradise,
We shall for ever dwell:
'Till then let's pray, both night and day,
And thus dear friends farewell.

Wm. PHOEBUS.

New-York, April 1, 1806.

☞ At J. C. Totten's, No. 155, Chatham-street, and at the Rev. J. Wilson's, in Pearl-street, Subscribers may change their loose Numbers, for the Volumes, by paying the price of Binding.

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